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THE GREAT PSYCHICAL OPPORTUNITY.

SOMETHING over three years ago, in February, 1882, there was organized in London a society which had what one is half tempted to call the Opportunity of the Century in its hands. In these days,—when the multiple power of the unit has reached a point of social infliction which makes every fresh combination of human beings an object of dread, if not of suspicion; when the well-instructed citizen adds to his litany: “Deliver us from associations, and lead us not into committees!” when people who draw up a constitution and by-laws, for any purpose whatever, must show their charter, or stand back in the name of over-organized humanity,—it is much to say of any newly-associated effort that its final cause seems so adequate as that of the Society for Psychical Research.

The prospectus of this society says:

“It has been widely felt that the present is an opportune time for making an organized and systematic attempt to investigate that large group of debatable phenomena designated by such terms as mesmeric, psychical, and spiritualistic. From the recorded testimony of many competent witnesses, past and present, including observations recently made by scientific men of eminence in various countries, there appears to be, amidst much illusion and deception, an important body of remarkable phenomena, which are *primâ facie* inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis, and which, if incontestably established, would be of the highest possible value.”

It is not necessary to quarrel with the assertion of the well-known and well-informed gentlemen who stand sponsors for this society, when they proceed to say that

“The task of examining such residual phenomena has often been undertaken by individual effort, but never hitherto by a scientific society organized on a sufficiently broad basis.”

Nor should we overlook the prudent reminder of the President of the Association, that

“It does not throw aside *en bloc* the results of previous inquiries as untrustworthy, and arrogate a superior knowledge of Scientific method, or intrinsically

greater trustworthiness. . . . I do not presume to suppose that I could produce evidence better in quality than much that has been laid before the world by writers of indubitable scientific repute—men like Mr. Crookes, Mr. Wallace, and the late Professor De Morgan. But it is clear that from what I have defined as the aim of the society, however good some of its evidence may be in quality, we require a great deal more of it. . . . What I mean by *sufficient evidence* . . . of thought-reading, clairvoyance, or the phenomena called spiritualistic . . . is evidence that will convince the scientific world; and for that we obviously require a good deal more than we have so far obtained.”

And, again, from whatever point of view one may approach the position of the investigators who have this work in hand, few of us will fail to echo Professor Sedgwick’s assertion, that

“We are all agreed that the present state of things is a scandal to the enlightened age in which we live. That the dispute as to the reality of these marvelous phenomena—of which it is quite impossible to exaggerate the importance, if only a tenth part of what has been alleged by generally credible witnesses could be shown to be true—I say it is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on, that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them, that so many of these should be profoundly interested in having the question determined, and yet that the educated world, as a body, should still be simply in the attitude of incredulity.”

A sturdy child of the English parentage, there has bounded into birth among ourselves an important organization dedicated to the same work, and if the names upon its board of officers mean anything, we have prudence and power enough pledged to the business at home to give candor a trial and truth a chance.

Wisely said Professor Barrett, of Dublin, who was present at the opening meeting of the American Society for Psychical Research :

“Of course, persons who take up this matter must expect no little ridicule, and perhaps some abuse. But, out of alchemy came chemistry, and out of astrology, astronomy. There may be much in these extraordinary accounts of second-sight, thought-reading, apparitions, and so forth, fit only for ridicule; but if there are any facts at the bottom, we want to find them.”

What, now, is the great, inattentive, incredulous intelligence, called the public, to understand that these learned gentleman are doing? It is time that the intellectual “thick weather” which lies about the vague thing known as psychical investigation should, to some extent, clarify among unscientific people. What are Professor Sedgwick, of Trinity College, and Professor Barrett, of Dublin, and the Bishop of Carlisle, and Mr. Frederick Myers about? And what (in an honorary capacity) Dr. Crookes and

Alfred Wallace and Lord Tennyson and Mr. Ruskin? What are Harvard College Observatory and Harvard Chair of Metaphysics, and members of the Faculty of Johns Hopkins and the University of Pennsylvania, and the wisdom and influence of our own learned and cool-headed men, who do not "give names" without consciences behind them, accomplishing, or about to accomplish, among ourselves?

When the greatest intellectual discovery of our times was made, it was wrought out of the inductive method, inch by inch, laboriously, consistently, and triumphantly. The theory of evolution was a masterpiece of loving toil, and of relentless logic. Darwin* was twenty-two years in collecting and controlling the material for the "Origin of Species" and the "Descent of Man." Wallace, who competed with him for the formulation of the evolutionary law, was submerged like one of their own shells in the waves that beat upon the shores of the Malay archipelago. These men gave their souls and bodies to become students of the habits of a mollusk or a monkey, the family peculiarities of a bug or a bird, the private biographies of a mastodon or a polyp, the measurable but imperceptible movement of a glacier, the ancestry of a parasite, the vanity of a butterfly, the digestion of a fly-catcher, the moral nature of a climbing plant, or the journey of an insect from one desert island to another upon a floating bough.

Induction, which is as familiar as Bacon, and as old as philosophy, became, in the hands of the "Greatest since Newton," an applied force which has taught the century—nay, which has taught all time and all truth—a solemn lesson. Two things are needed to the discovery of a great principle: the power to attend, and the power to infer. We might add a third, the power to imagine, which may be overlooked in the construction of important theory; but, whatever may be said of that, the power to attend, coming first in order, must be first considered. Darwin's colossal success was owing, to an extent which it is impossible for a lesser mind to measure, to his almost supernatural power of attention to the natural; his superhuman patience of observation and record.

* "It occurred to me," he says, "in 1837, that something might perhaps be made out on this question by patiently accumulating and reflecting. . . . After five years' work, I allowed myself to speculate on the subject . . . from that period to the present day, I have steadily pursued the same object." (Introduction to "Origin of Species," published in 1859.)

He observed and recorded as no other man of our day has done ; his power of inference proved equal to his observing and recording power ; and we have the doctrine of evolution by which physical science has been the first, but will not be the last, may even prove to be the least of human interests yet to profit unspeakably.

It would seem that the trained minds called to the leadership of the new psychical movement have been prompt to turn the *geist* of the century in the last direction in which we should have looked for it. The current that wrought marvels out of stocks and stones they propose to pour upon air and essence. What conquered matter shall assail mind ? What ordered order shall dominate the disorderly ? The scientific method shall now rule the unscientific madness, and we shall see what we shall see.

In the metaphysical and in the physical worlds the legal fiber is essentially the same. The material differs more than the method. In this case there exists one distinction : that it is in a peculiar sense to the help of the unlearned that the learned have appealed in the work of the psychical organizations. Here is a mass of, let us say, asserted but unverified fact, which, if true, is of immeasurable importance to the interests of the human race. Such verification is not, as yet, to be found in libraries or in laboratories. Telescope and microscope and chip-hammer and retort do not serve the case. The literature of the subject is, in great part, untested, illegal, whimsical, prehistoric to the spirit of the scientific era, and to the spirit in which, if at all, such a subject must now be approached. Here we have to deal with an inchoate accumulation of mind-facts or soul-facts, of which the mind or the soul must be clerk, witness, judge, and juror. Here, especially, we have to do with confused freshets and land-slides of material which, pre-eminently above other material that science has sought to arrange and label, depends upon the intelligence and veracity of human beings for its classification. Here, in short, we come yesterday, to-day, and forever, jaggedly against the supreme difficulties attaching to the validity and credibility of testimony. Here, because of the supremacy of these difficulties, superstition and science must not shoot, but grapple.

Hence, we see, with a keen sense of their wisdom, the officers of the psychical societies appealing, at the outset, to the public for co-operation in the work of investigating that which is hidden, not in desert islands, or in glaciers, or in craters, or in crucibles, or in

cuneiform inscriptions, but in human experience. On human intelligence and veracity the test must strike; it would seem that the electric light of science blazes white enough now, if ever, to try them. Did it seem a dubious experiment to flood the English-reading world with little circulars asking for authentic cases of mind-reading, or visions, as reported at first-hand by reporters willing to be personally investigated? Was it with amusement that we first saw these dignified gentlemen subpoena apparitions from the most intelligent families? Did we fall into the automatic attitudes of perplexity when English science solemnly sent social cards to haunted houses? Did we ask why this precious ointment was not sold to the poor, when we saw learned men playing the "Willing Game" in country-houses to find out whether the human mind can get through sealed walls? And when one of the most important philosophical chairs in the country is represented on the committee inviting spiritualistic mediums to "demonstrate to us experimentally their possession of peculiar powers," do we sneer or smile?

If we are wise, we shall do neither. These men know what they are about, and why they are about it. They know that no previous investigations of the most insoluble problem of human history have been built upon a basis broad enough or strong enough to do the thing which is now attempted by the strongest and longest lever that can be thrust beneath it. They know that our advanced civilization has an advanced chance at the eternal mystery. They know that what superstition has made folly of; and religion, mysticism; and literature, sensationalism; and the rudimentary science of the past, stuff-and-nonsense—the developed science of to-day should make sense of; nay, must make sense of, or suffer what we are now prepared to see would become the greatest defeat that the scientific claim has undergone. They know, in short, that the ingenuity of the scientific method and the patience of the scientific temper and the equability of the scientific temperament ought to be the equivalent of ghost-stories and table-tippings and occult letters and materializations in London, and *séances* in Boston; and that it is the worse for science if they are not. The greater the weight, the more the strands in the cable that hoists it. Nothing is too small for so huge a work as that which would lift the load of mystery older than the Witch of Endor, terrified at her trick, which had summoned what we should now find it fashionable to

call a "telepathic impression"—a load as new as the last poor creature, in fresh mourning, paying two dollars a sitting to a fifth-story medium, to get "communications" from her dead child. He who means to win in a charge upon this mountain of mystery and misery can condescend—must condescend—to the infinite drudgery of discovery. It may not be too much to say that the greatest physical and metaphysical scholars of our day can do no better thing with their gifts, or their greatness, than to apply to the psychological facts the sheer force which has conquered the physical—the force that adequately observes and records before inferring; or, as Darwin puts it, that "accumulates" before "reflecting." This, then, they have sought to do. As the apostle of evolution collected, collated, colligated his enormous array of facts before theorizing, they who undertake this other task would collect, collate, and colligate the disarray of their facts before they theorize.

Let them call upon us to tell our coincident dreams, and give the references of our grandfather's ghost, and sift before their scathing jury the hallucinations, or clairvoyances, or clairaudiences, or presentiments, that our "intelligence and veracity" can muster to the summons. The more the better. The patience that summons should be equal to the perplexity that replies. Men have dedicated their lives to the classification of an insect, or the cultivation of an accent. Why not study the power which makes one man able to make another say Peter Piper, across the width of the house, with the doors shut? The spirit which gave to the world her great scientific gospel devoured itself till it knew why the flesh of a creature, invisible without the microscope, was of the color of the leaf on which it lived and died. Why, then, should not a man keep tally of the relative number of times that a blindfold subject will select the right card from a pack? "High authorities" have wearied themselves to account for the difference in the molars and premolars within the jaws of the dog and the Tasmanian wolf. May not a scientist eat mustard, to see if his mesmeric recipient will say that his mouth is burnt? Or even ask why a valuable piece of property stands unrented for a generation, because a dead woman is said to be heard sobbing in it? In brief, are not the methods which overcome the mysteries of matter entitled to the same exercise and to the same respect that they have had, when they are applied to the mysteries of mind? Here, we say, are the facts. Hundreds of people, whose word of honor is as good intellectual coin as that

of the reader of this page or the contributor to this REVIEW, have testified to the conveyance of thought, without visible or audible or tangible media, from embodied mind to embodied mind ; to the tragic or the trivial incidents of mesmerism ; to the coincidence of dreams ; to the prophecy of mental convictions ; to the visual appearance of the distant living ; to the sight or sign of what is thought to be the more distant dead.

Thousands of sensible and reliable men and women to-day believe these things on the strength of personal experience ; and, believing, accept them with such explanation of their own as they may, in default of any from silent science. It would seem as if these circumstances were of as much importance to science as the transverse lamellæ in the beak of a shoveler duck, or the climate of the lowlands under the equator during the severe part of the glacial period.

A cautious Spiritualist, prominently identified with the movements of his sect, in reply to inquiries made for use in this paper writes :

“ I think it would be within bounds to say, that in this country, the number who have by personal investigation come into what they believe to be a knowledge of spirit return and manifestation is not less than 2,000,000, and that a still larger number have experienced enough to satisfy them that there ‘is something in it,’ but how much they don’t know.”

Estimates two or three times as large are made by less careful zealots. The writer of the article on Spiritualism in the “*American Encyclopædia*,” says :

“ As the organized bodies of Spiritualists include but a small proportion of those who wholly or partially accept these phenomena, it is impossible to make even an approximate estimate of their number.”

In Great Britain, the number is supposed to be larger than among ourselves. Here, let us say, to take the most modest figures, are two millions of our people, intelligent enough to conduct the affairs and obey the laws and bear the responsibilities of average civilized society, who habitually and confidently approach the awful verities of death through the unexplained trance which we content ourselves with calling a morbid nervous condition ; people whose main religious faith is formulated—God help them !—in the columns of papers,—most of which we never read if we can help it,—or in the pages of what they are pleased to call a New Bible, spiritually communicated through mediums of the sect. Say what we

may (and we ought to say it) of the nonsense, say what we may of the fraud, of the jugglery, the hysteria, the blasphemy mixed to a mush with the whole matter, the significant fact remains, that here is a huge class not of the lowest or most illiterate, while not yet, to any marked extent, of the wisest or highest, who believe themselves, in our highly-illuminated times, to have found some means of access to the consciousness of their dead. Here is the massive bulwark of the mystery—be it from within or from without; were it from above or from below; call it a base trick or a glorious possibility—where the Prince of the Power of the Air intrenches himself; that he gives or assumes to give, or is believed to give to the starving human heart, bereaved of its bread of life, the crumbs from the table of Love and Death. Were it not as great a deed, is it not as large a duty, to hunt down the facts behind this faith, to grip the truth from out this error, to have this law that lies between the body and the soul, as it were to discover the link between a monkey and a man?

Modern science is systematically severe in the conditions which she lays upon the spirit of inquiry. The spirit of inquiry may, in turn, demand something of her. We say a great deal in these days about the scientific basis of thought and action. What do we mean by it? We suppose ourselves to mean that a subject shall be approached with two qualifications: equipment and candor; the presence of equivalent ability, and the absence of nullifying prejudice. These two endowments we have the right to expect of any investigators who penetrate the unexplored upon the map of Truth. We may assume that the eminent officers and members of the psychological societies represent a wide enough range of training, psychological and physiological, religious and skeptical, to deprive us of all necessity to question their possession of the first of these conditions. Remembering the fatal facility with which the latter escapes the highest human intelligences, nay, seems often to escape in proportion to the power of pure intellectual absorption, we must adjust our anticipations in that direction more in the form of "a solemn hope" (as the sub-Positivists say of immortality) than of a fixed assurance. We have read of the chemist who said to a philosopher: "But the chemical facts, my dear sir, are precisely the reverse of what you suppose." "Have the goodness, then," was the instantaneous reply, "to tell me what they are, that I may ex-

plain them on my system." Such a spirit, which, alas ! is newer than the anecdote, would be worse than no spirit at all, in the attempt to bring down so subtle and mocking a truth as that which flies or floats in obscure psychical phenomena. We have to deal now with wings, not clay ; we must use arrows and nets, not dericks and dynamite. We must take straight lines through infinite ether, and measure the velocities of the zephyrs, and the atmospheric pressure of mists. We have to keep the judgment as open as a cloud to the colors of the sun. Our observation must be aerometric. Science finds herself in a New Earth ; whether New Heavens are above it, it is for her—and for Truth—to say.

There were scholars among the contemporaries of Galileo who never would consent to look through a telescope, lest they should be compelled to admit the existence of the stars which he had discovered. Such intellectual palsy is not out of the world's system yet. It is the rarest thing upon earth to be fair. It is a rarer thing, among what are called scientific minds, than this paper has space to justify itself for asserting. Of all human teachers, they whose claim to our respect is founded most confidently upon their endowment fail us sometimes most roundly in this secondary qualification of simple, human candor. The bigotry of the laboratory and the library is quite as robust as the bigotry of the altar and the creed. The *præjudicium* which is infiltrated with matter and fact is as stiff as that which has become hygroscopic of mind and theory. We hear a great deal about the value of scientific evidence. We have the right to ask a great deal of the scientific attitude. What should it be ? That which George Eliot would call one of "massive receptiveness." What must it be ? That which will stand the test of its own primer and grammar. Wise are they who would be unsparing as a sieve, made from the hair on the brows of Minerva, in their definition of "evidence ;" what sifts through those exquisite meshes is worth the pains. But observe the hand that weaves the sieve ; and watch the volition that guides the hand. An imperceptible jar of human prejudice may spoil the finest web of attention and inference that ever the human mind has wrought. It is his first privilege, who would take the attitude that qualifies him for handling delicate evidence, to see to it that his candor is educated equally with his skill. We have passed the time when a man might assume the name of philosopher, who did not hesitate to say that he would rather be in the wrong with Plato than in

the right with his opponents. What is it, indeed, to be candid, but to be willing to see a thing turn out either way? What is the scientific spirit, but the honest spirit? What is the investigating power, but the judicial power? What is it to be wise, but to be just?

A keen modern writer has well said, that by the time a man becomes an authority in any scientific subject he becomes a nuisance upon it, because he is sure to retain errors which were in vogue when he was young, but which a newer wisdom has rejected. Such an accusation ought to become, in proportion to the enlightenment of the age, unjust or impossible. The qualification of candor should grow as fast as that of equipment. As the intellectual outfit of scholars multiplies, fairness in the use of it should increase proportionately, must increase proportionately, or the investigating power "loses stroke" upon one side, and we have an eagle with a wing crippled seeking to cut a straight course to the stars, or expecting the observer to think he does. "Were there a single man," says Bacon, "to be found with firmness sufficient to efface from his mind the theories and notions vulgarly received, and to apply his intellect free and without prevention, the best hopes might be entertained of his success."

What is it, then, to be great, but to be fair? He who would approach a subject like this of which we write, in the sacred name of science, needs to be manned for the results, be they what they may. This matter is too large for any littleness of spirit to grasp. No prepossessions are going to get at it. It is not time yet for any "working hypothesis." It is too early to have assurances that one thing can, or another cannot be. We shall never have the truth by inventing it, but by discovering it. We must be equal to the surprises of truth. If she beat the breath out of our dearest delusions, we must be willing to bury them. If she strike the keystone out of our firmest convictions, we must be able to climb their ruins. I say, without hesitation, that no investigator is qualified to pass judgment upon psychical phenomena, who is not equally ready to admit, if admit he must, in the end, that he is dealing with the physiological action of cells in the frontal lobes of the brain, or with the presence of a human soul disembodied by death. He must be hospitable to a hallucination, or to a spectre. He must be, if necessary, just to an apparition as well as generous to a molecule. He must use the eyes of his soul as well

as the lense of his microscope. He must not be frightened away from the discovery of some superb unknown law, because there is a vulgar din of "Ghosts!" about his ears. He had better find a ghost, if ghost there be, than to find nothing at all, for fear it may not be "scientific" to walk about after one is dead. That does not deserve the name of the scientific attitude which assumes that the supernatural is impossible, any more than that which assumes that it is necessary. No foregone conclusion which restricts the nature of an undiscovered law to a purely physical basis is more scholarly than the bias which prejudicates a superhuman agency behind the dancing of a piano in the air. It may be just as unscientific to assert prematurely that a man of honor, intelligence, and education is suffering from a mere local affection of the retina, when he testifies that he sees and converses with the image of his distant brother at the moment of that brother's death by accident, as it would be to assert that Aristotle expresses himself to the American public through the columns of the "Banner of Light." It may be no more judicial to predetermine that the appearance of phosphorescent letters in the air, under given conditions, must of necessity be a piece of jugglery, than it would be to fall upon our knees before it as the work of angels, or cross ourselves before it as the threat of demons. He may be no more fitted for psychical research who dismisses a certified instance of the clairaudient inter-consciousness of friends a thousand miles apart, as a foredoomed coincidence or exaggeration, than he who would accept the "communication" of his recently dead son, sent to him unsought by the medium who has dared to subject the sacred privacy of a stranger's bereavement to the paragraph of the Spiritualistic press, happily unaware that the supposed spirit has forgotten, in the educational elevation of the disembodied life, how to spell his own name. The philosophical faculty may be no more exhibited by the student who takes it for granted that the raps in a circle of investigators are made by knuckles or toe-joints, than it is exhibited by the man who guides his investments on the advice of a female medium who does not know the difference between a United States registered bond and Mr. Micawber's note-of-hand. To assume that a historical case of house possession like that of Wesley, or his more modern fellow-sufferers, is an ingenious trick or a highly-developed rat, is perhaps, if we think of it, not much more intelligent than to manage one's matrimonial

affairs in accordance with the direction of a gentleman who examines locks of hair, and charges a dollar for his opinion.

The question : What is evidence ? is a long one to answer ; but the question : What is prejudice ? is short enough. The stiff materialist is not educated for a sound investigator any more than the limp emotionalist ; and the impulse to decry, as a matter of course, the mental or psychical basis of obscure phenomena, is scarcely more reasonable than the hysteria which hangs upon Indian babble as the utterance of the intelligent dead. As it is not logic not to accept consequences, so it is not philosophy not to prepare for them. A certain class of minds has to learn that the illogical and unphilosophical have no more chance at mystery than they have at mathematics ; and that our chief hope of success in these matters lies in our more highly-developed modern consciousness of this fact, and of what it means. It is not a fixed bayonet, piercing in but one direction ; it is the Flaming Sword that turneth either way.

We have said that it is too early to accept a working hypothesis. In the work of the English society, a close observer may already detect the danger of a mistake in the precise direction where the Society most deprecates mistake in its coadjutors. It seems to us that a hypothesis is put to very hard play, if not to work, in the hands of the committees most interested in the telepathic theory. Between the physical and the supernatural explanations of these phenomenal facts there is a middle ground, whereon the conjecture formulated into what is called Telepathy has sprung. If not ghosts, if not jugglery, if not electricity, we have now offered to us the occult action of living mind upon mind ; and we have an excellent conjecture. Suppose that the telepathic theory might explain an immense proportion (I do not say all) of what are called the supernatural facts of Spiritualism ; whether it does so, we have not yet "accumulated and reflected" enough to say. Both the objections to and the arguments for the adaptation of telepathy to these phenomena are keenly interesting ; but they would require the leisure of a paper to themselves to discuss them intelligently.

There is here, we say, an excellent conjecture, so far as it goes. No student of the subject can deny that. But no student of the subject ought to assume, at this stage of the investigation, that telepathy goes far enough. Wait. Let us not repeat the blunder of superstition or of incredulity. Wait. Let us have something

that will go to the end of the matter. Sir Isaac Newton humbly said that he had one talent: the ability to look steadily at a problem until he saw it through. The only hope that we have in dealing with this problem of problems lies in the will and the power to look at it until we see it through. The world has played with the thing long enough. Otherwise sensible human beings have been the dupes or the cynics of the subject from age to age, and from civilization to civilization. It is time that the mystery which has baffled twenty centuries found its master. Other secrets of force have defied and been conquered. Why not this? Other laws have eluded and been grasped. Why not this? Other dangers have been dared, other obstacles pulverized, other ridicule or indifference waived, other patience and passion spent for other conflicts with the reluctance of nature to surrender truth. Why not these, and for this? Here is one fact: the existence from all time of a huge sum of inexplicable phenomena. Here is another: the intelligent human will. At this epoch of our development there ought, if ever, to be an equation between the two. The Indian occultist, the Jewish sorcerer, the Scotch seer, the Puritan witch, the modern medium, have presented but so many passing forms of the permanent fact, which, like Ahasuerus, has wandered from generation to generation, a homeless, deathless, unwelcome thing. Like the Spanish knight in the song, it

“Rides from land to land,
It sails from sea to sea.”

If the time has come to break lances with it, let us do so in downright earnest.

That was a timely incident recalled by one of the distinguished investigators in London, and attributed to Sir William Hamilton and Airey. It was Airey who, Sir William having alluded to some important mathematical fact, answered: “No, it cannot be.” The great philosopher gently observed: “I have been investigating it closely for the last five months, and cannot doubt its truth.” “But,” said Airey, “I’ve been at it for the last five minutes, and cannot see it at all!”

The psychical opportunity, as it may be called, takes its due chronological order after the great physical opportunity of which modern science has already availed itself, and may be looked upon as a natural sequence—as a case of evolutionary growth in inves-

tigation. After the more demonstrable comes the more elusive ; after the more manifest, the more occult. We are now to prepare for what an American philosopher calls "the growing predominance of the psychical life."

View it through whatever glass we may, there is a chance here for a great discovery and for a great discoverer. The day has gone when the stock arguments of incredulity are strong enough to grip the subject. To assume that a large mass of our respectable fellow-citizens are either fools or knaves no longer quite covers the case. The jugglery hypothesis, too often a sound and necessary one, is not elastic enough to stretch over the circuit ; as in a case of house-possession personally known to the writer of this paper, which was carried to the leading prestidigitator of the day for his professional opinion, with the inquiry : "Is there anything in your business which would explain these occurrences?" "No!" was the ringing answer, with a terrible thump of the conjurer's hand upon the table. "No! And by — I wouldn't stay in such a house twenty-four hours!"

Here we stand, at the gates of an unknown law, or series of laws. To know that the unknown exists is a step gained. Science has never rested before her own admitted ignorance. To concede that there is something to conquer is to go far in prophecy that she will conquer it. When organized knowledge brings to her siege a docility equivalent to the force of resistance, the counter-scarp is passed. To be educated in the laws of matter is the cell-life of knowledge. In its vertebrate development it must command the laws of mind. He makes as unscientific a mistake who would perceive the truths of physics, and stop there, as he would who should write a system of metaphysics without a knowledge of physiology. Science has her superstitions as well as faith ; it is the first of these to be superstitiously afraid of superstition. Only with the developed courage which is implied in perfect skill are the tactics of truth to be mastered. We may say that Science at the bayonet's point, before the fortress of Mystery, is put upon her mettle at last. Too unscholarly has been the sneer or the silence ; too feeble the attack ; too serious have been the defeats. The moment of the charge has come. Most great martial crises create great generals. If ever there was a chance for one in the history of human knowledge, there is a chance for one to-day, and here.

Shall the power which could classify the kingdoms of the earth,

and claim the glory of them, be thwarted by the capacity of an untouched dining-table to thump a man against a wall? Is a "brain-wave" more unmanageable than an ether-wave? We are taught that there are octaves in the wave-lengths of light corresponding to octaves in sound-vibrations, and that the spectrum has been studied for about four octaves beyond the red end, and one beyond the violet. Is this a less mysterious accomplishment than the power of the human will to act as a substitute for anæsthesia in a surgical operation? Is the boldest conjecture of telepathy more stupendous than the telephone was twelve years ago? We smile when we are told of the telegraphic battery constructed for the accommodation of what are called spirits who desire to employ the Morse alphabet. There are probably few readers of this periodical who would get beyond a smile in regard to such an invention. Yet, is the unknown action of mind on mind possibly expressed through such a use of the laws of electricity more amazing than the half-developed phonograph from which we were told we were to hear the treasured voices of the dead or absent?

Whether we are dealing with matter, mind, or spirit, it is too early yet in the process of investigation to know. It is not too early to know that one law may be no more illegal than another law, and that because we understand the conditions of one, and do not understand the conditions of the other, is no more of a reason why the other should not exist, than Franklin's ignorance of the value of shares in the Electric Light Company of New York City, to-day, was a reason for not putting up the first lightning-rods. It is not too early to know that the psychical opportunity is a great chance for honesty and liberality of spirit, for originality and force of mind, for attention, for patience, for reason, and, we may say, for hope. What benefactors to their kind will they be who shall clutch from this mystery, ancient as earth, shadowy as dreams, and somber as fate, the substance of a verified law!

Be it the law which guides the telegraph, the law which sways an audience, the law by which a hand-pass cures a headache, the law which unites the thoughts of distant friends, or the law by which dumb death should create a vocabulary for deaf life, the chance to formulate it is the chance for a great achievement. Accomplished or defeated, it is an achievement for scholarship and for common-sense to undertake with a sober,

dedicated spirit, adequate to the seriousness of the consequences involved in success or failure. We may add, what is sure to be understood by some of our readers, and as sure not to be by others, that it is an achievement asking also for the higher education of that candid and noble power imperfectly called spirituality of nature. He who has enough of this faculty to respect it, will follow our meaning. We need not tax the patience of him who has not, by here emphasizing the relation of such a power to the scientific method.

In physical theory, the gap between the development of the lower and higher organizations has never been filled. In religious belief, there remains an insoluble mystery about the doctrine that claims to mediate between God and man. In psychical speculation, too, shall we expect a missing link? Will the conjunctive between life and death elude us? The combining medium of soul and body defy us? When we have a psychical system lacking no more than science and theology lack, we may pause, and we should not pause till then. One need not be a Spencerian in philosophy, to cry with Spencer: "The deepest truth we can get at must be unaccountable."

The Darwin of the science of the soul is yet to be. He has a large occasion. It will be found greater to explain the dissolution than the evolution of the race. It is more to teach us where we go to than to tell us what we came from. From the "Descent" to the "Destiny" of man is the natural step. The German physicist who gave his book the supreme title of "The Discovery of the Soul" was wiser than he knew. That was a piercing satire on the materialistic philosophy which suggested, not long since, that mourners hereafter be given front seats at geological lectures, and the most deeply bereaved provided with chip-hammers to collect specimens. Older than the classic of St. Pierre, and young as the anguish of yesterday, is the moan: "Since death is a good, and since Virginia is happy, I would die, too, and be united to Virginia."

Science has given us a past. Too long has she left it to faith to give us a future. Human love cannot be counted out of the forces of nature; and earth-bound human knowledge turns to lift its lowered eyes toward the firmament of immortal life.

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